(d) the amount of wheat procured since 2004-05 is indicated below:

(In lakh tonnes)

Year	Procurement
2004-05	167.96
2005-06	147.87
2006-07	92.25*

•upto 25.07.2006

(e) The reasons for low procurement of wheat during Rabi marketing season 2006-07 were lower market arrivals, higher ruling market prices, lower level on stocks at the time of procurement and aggressive purchase of wheat by private traders.

Coverage area of Bt. Cotton

1197. SHRIMATI N.P DURGA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has now become a major player in the transgenic crops by achieving coverage area of 50,000 hectares;

(b) whether it is also a fact that India has hiked its Bt. Cotton areas coverage by 400 per cent between 2002-04;

(c) if so, the percentage of increase in Andhra Pradesh since introduction of Bt. Cotton in the country; and

(d) in what manner Government are planning to galvanise the global biotech crop market in the next three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) Bt. Cotton is the only transgenic crop approved for commercial cultivation in India by Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) of Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF). The area under Bt. Cotton crop was approximately one million hectares during Kharif, 2005.

(b) and (c) The area under Bt. Cotton Crop in the country has increased from 72,682 acres in 2002 to 12,13,359 acres in 2004. During the same period, the area under Bt. Cotton cultivation increased from 9,404 acres to 1,76,000 acres in Andhra Pradesh.

(d) The Department of Biotechnology has approved large number of transgenic crops like Brinjal, Cotton, Chickpea, Groundnut, Maize, Mustard, Pigeonpea, Rice, Tomato, Cabbage, Cauliflower and Okra for conduct of contained limited field trials including multi-location field trails during 2004-05.

Compensation to poultry farmers of Maharashtra

1198. SHRIMATI HEMAMALINI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of poultry farms working in Maharashtra and the investment made therein as on date;

(b) whether it is a fact that the poultry farmers have started committing suicide due to non-payment of compensation at the rate of Rs. 20/- declared by the State Government because of Bird Flu epidemic;

(c) how much loss is estimated due to Bird Flu epidemic slaughter of hens and reduced rate of meat to poultry farmers; and

(d) the steps taken to provide relief and rehabilitation to poultry farmers of Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) In the absence of any requirement for registration of poultry farms, the number of such farms working in the State of maharashtra is not held on record. Similarly, as these poultry farms have been funded from diverse sources, total investment made in them can also not be assessed. However, the '17th Indian Livestock Census, 2003' puts the poultry population in Maharashtra at 37.97 million.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) An amount of Rs. 270.08 lakh was paid as culling compensation to poultry farmers to compensate their loss. Apart from